

Leading an Effective IEP Team Meeting

Increase productivity, compliance, and outcomes

Results Driven Accountability (RDA)

- Leading an effective IEP meeting aligns with RDA core principles:
 - Drives improved outcomes for all children and youth with disabilities.
 - Ensures the protection of the individual rights of each child or youth with a disability and their families.
 - Is responsive to the needs and expectations of the ultimate consumers (i.e., children and youth with disabilities and their families) as they identify them.

Lead an IEP Team with Purpose

- Create and foster confident and secure relationships.
- Share responsibility for the process and results.
- Remain student focused.
- Communicate effectively.
- Listen reflectively.
- Reach consensus.

Purpose and Process

- Objectives of an IEP meeting
 - Review the present levels of performance.
 - Create meaningful and achievable goals.
 - Plan specially designed instruction, related services, and personnel support required for success.
 - Agree to educational placement.

Why Lead an Effective IEP Meeting?

- Due process is costly.
- Ineffective meetings yield conflict.
- Unintended consequences

The Foundations of Conflict: FAPE and LRE

- FAPE violations:
 - Performance of services
 - Procedural

Least Restrictive Environment

- Should be addressed at every meeting
- Placement is **never** predetermined!
- To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities . . . are educated with children who are nondisabled; and
 - Special classes, schooling, or other removal . . . from the general educational environment occurs only if the nature and severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

34 CFR §300.114 (a)(2)

LRE: Case Scenario

- Your district is in a tough financial crisis. To cut down on the number of 1:1 aides that you employ, students who were previously given an aide for inclusion opportunities are now expected to either go alone or stay in the special education classroom. You have heard rumblings of a class action complaint by the parents.
- **Is this a violation of LRE?**

Keys for Success

- Shared responsibility
- Collaborative attitude
- Strategic planning
- Facilitative behaviors



First, Take a Step Back . . .

- Before the meeting, the leader will need to communicate with the team:
 - Contact the parent.
 - Are accommodations required for participants?
 - Who needs to attend, including required and discretionary team members?
 - Determine a good meeting time for all.
 - Determine a good meeting place: consider needs of participants.
 - Materials required: chart paper? laptop? projector? SMART Board?
 - Prepare draft of the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAPF) and goals.
 - Communicate with team members to collect topics/concerns to address.

Participants

- The team tasked with the work
- Student centered
- Manage information
- Develop/review/revise the IEP
- Complete paperwork

Activity
Who Am I?

- IEP team Jeopardy!
- Required and discretionary members will be described.
- Answer in the form of a question.

Who Am I?

- I can draw bell curves.
- I am the data dude/dudette.
- I can describe the educational impact and needs resulting from the disability.

The Interpreter of Instructional Implications
of Evaluations

- School psychologist
- Speech-language pathologist
- Special education teacher
- Someone who can make connections between the evaluation results and the impact of the disability on the student's education

Who Am I?

- I am qualified to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities.
- I am knowledgeable about the general curriculum.
- I am knowledgeable about the availability of the school's resources.

The LEA Representative

- Administrator or designee
- Makes decisions when consensus cannot be reached
- Has the power to allocate school funding and resources

Who Am I?

- I am the student's very first teacher.
- I am an advocate.
- I know the student the best.

Parent of the Student

- Until the student reaches 18 years old
- At least one parent must be present or afforded the opportunity to participate.

Who Am I?

- I play a central role in the education of children with disabilities.
- I implement the program of FAPE described in the IEP for most children with disabilities.
- I bring the unique perspective of the general curriculum to the IEP team.
- I have a real impact on the decision-making process.

The General Education Teacher

- Provides input on the grade-level standards
- Describes the needs to be successful in the general classroom environment
- Reports data on progress within the general curriculum in all areas
- **Appendix A to the Regulations:** The regular education teacher who serves as a member of the child's IEP team should be a teacher who is, or may be, responsible for implementing a portion of the IEP so that the teacher can participate in discussions about how best to teach the child.

Who Am I?

- I provide specially designed instruction.
- I have knowledge of Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards.
- I can accommodate and modify the standards to meet the student's needs.
- I can support the educational impact of the student's disability.
- I am a specialist in how students with disabilities learn.

The Special Education Teacher

- Holds state certification as a special education teacher
- Works with students who have a wide range of learning, mental, emotional, and physical disabilities
- Adapts general education curriculum and is able to teach various subjects, such as reading, writing, and math
- Teaches to the skill level of all students
- Understands specially designed instruction

Who Am I?

- I participate in planning for activities after high school.
- The legal rights will transfer to me.
- It is all about me.

The Student

- Must be invited to the meeting when transition planning occurs, at a minimum before turning 16
- Can attend when appropriate
- Provides a personal account of needs and strengths

Who Am I?

- I am a discretionary team member.
- I am involved with transportation or such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education.
- I have special knowledge and expertise.
- I know additional information pertinent to the child for instructional planning.

Related Service Providers

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speech language pathology and audiology services• Psychological services• Physical and occupational therapy• Recreation• Counseling services• Rehabilitative counseling• Orientation and mobility services | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical services• School health services• Social work services• Parent counseling and training• Transportation• Teacher of the visually impaired• Teacher of the hearing impaired |
|--|---|

Excusals

- A member of the IEP team shall not be required to attend an IEP meeting, in whole or in part, if the parent of a child with a disability and the LEA agree that the attendance of such member is not necessary because the member's area of the curriculum or related services is not being modified or discussed in the meeting. 34 CFR §300.321(e)
- A member of the IEP team may be excused from attending an IEP meeting, in whole or in part, when the meeting involves a modification to or discussion of the member's area of the curriculum or related services, if—
 - the parent and the local educational agency consent to the excusal; and
 - the member submits, in writing to the parent and the IEP team, input into the development of the IEP prior to the meeting.
- WRITTEN AGREEMENT AND CONSENT REQUIRED—
A parent's agreement shall be in writing.

Roles for Participants

- Timekeeper
- Notetaker
- Focus monitor
- Leader
- Active participant

Why Meet?

Purpose of the meeting: action and information oriented

- | | |
|------------------|--------------|
| • Make decisions | • Team-build |
| • Inform | • Celebrate |
| • Plan | • Learn |
| • Solve problems | • Report |
| • Track progress | |

Preparation

- Respect for people's time
- Conscious preparation yields a productive meeting.
- Clear end result/outcome
- Steps to ensure child-focused outcomes

Setting Up for Success

- Purpose of the meeting
- School context and family assessment
- Analysis of potential scope of placement and services
- Stakeholder analysis
- Desired outcomes
- Room arrangement
- Consensus decision making
- Detailed agenda

Leading a Meeting

- What you need to do to lead:
 - Actively listen to all parties involved.
 - Insure active participation by all.
 - Ask the hard questions.
 - Introduce the difficult topic.
 - Make connections.
 - Always be student centered.

The Ground Rules

- Agreed-upon behaviors of the group
- Increase efficiency and prevent the group from getting off track
- Create a respectful and considerate atmosphere
- Provide boundaries for participation
- Get agreement on the rules before beginning the meeting—do we all agree to these rules?

Establish Outcomes of the Meeting

- By the end of the meeting, we will have:
 - Shared understanding of the student's present levels of performance
 - Shared understanding of the goals
 - Shared understanding of educational placement and services for the student

The Agenda

- Game plan for the IEP team
- Describes the range and scope of the discussions
- When to discuss relevant input
- Flow of topics
- Process steps
- Sequential map for the meeting

PLAAFP

- Academics
- Behavior
- Assistive technology
- Communication
- English language learning needs
- Hearing impairment/visual impairment
- Functional performance

Input from Team Members

- What are the parents' concerns, celebrations, questions?
- What can all the teachers share about performance across the curriculum?
- What accommodations have been most useful?
- What modifications to the standards were necessary?
- What have the teachers celebrated?
- Review progress towards previous goals.
- Discuss suggestions for goals for the revised IEP.

Check In . . .

- Building agreement is a major component of effective team work. A series of small agreements builds a firm foundation for collaborative action.
- Check for understanding and agreement; document for group memory.
- If the group is stuck, how can we move forward?
- Intervene to continue the forward momentum.

Interventions to Continue Momentum

- **Boomerang**—returning the question to the participant or group
- **Regain focus**—returning to the content you want to cover at that point in the agenda
- **Ask/say what is going on**—naming something that is not working, and getting it out into the open so the group can deal with it
- **Enforce process agreements**—bringing the group members back to the agenda or ground rules, or other process agreements made

Cont'd

- **Use body language**—using body language and voice inflection that will get and keep the meeting on track and is congruent with the message you want to deliver
- **Use humor**—making a joke or saying something humorous to relieve tension (Always make sure the use of humor is appropriate and not at someone else's expense.)
- **Accept/Legitimize/Deal with or Defer**—accepting the idea without agreeing or disagreeing / Repeating it or writing it down to legitimize it / Addressing it immediately or deferring until later in the meeting?

Goals

- Develop goals together as a team—best practice, but not often performed.
- Review goals recommended by the team members.
- Check for understanding by the parent and other team members.
 - Ask for paraphrase; explain goal in own words.
 - Describe how this goal relates to progress in the general curriculum.
 - Describe the connection to the PLAAF.

Check In . . .

- Do we have an understanding of the goals and objectives?
- Ask for a restatement of the goals for group understanding.
- Did all participants contribute to the discussion and decisions?

Activity

- In your group, using your PLAAPP, write a SMART goal.
- Name two accommodations that would be appropriate for this student.

What Services Does the Student Need?

- Describe the specially designed instruction recommended by the team members.
 - Keep the focus on supporting the student's access to the general curriculum.
 - Describe the related services, if any, that are required to support the curriculum.
 - Describe the supports for school personnel that are required.
 - Clarify what the services are and why they are required relative to the student's disability.
 - Provide example

Specially Designed Instruction

- Adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, . . . the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction
- Address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability
- Ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the standards that apply to all children
- The focus of the work of special educators is to help students attempt to learn the same things that students in the general education classroom are learning.

Related Services

- Based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, that will be provided to or on behalf of the child, that will be provided to enable the child—
 - To advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals.
 - To be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities.
 - To be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children.

Supplementary Aids and Services
Program Modifications

- Examples include, but are not limited to, orientation and mobility training, interpreter assistance, assistive technology devices or services, and instructional aides.
- Changes in the instructional level, the content, or the performance criteria.

Supports for School Personnel

- What do the staff working with this student need to know to facilitate success of the educational plan?
- Trainings must be specific to the needs of the student.
- Trainings should not be districtwide initiatives.

Check In . . .

- Do we have an understanding of the services to be provided?
- Ask for restatement of the plan for group understanding.
- Did all participants contribute to the discussion and decisions?
- Indicate agreement on the agenda.

Placement

- Discuss the required time outside of the classroom.
- Discuss any options for collaborative efforts of the team to reduce time outside of the classroom.
- Discuss how the teachers will coordinate planning efforts.
- Include an explanation of the extent to which the student will not be involved with nondisabled students.

Least Restrictive Environment

- To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Check In . . .

- Do we have an understanding of the placement for services to be provided?
- Ask for a restatement of the placement for group understanding.
- Did all participants contribute to the discussion and decisions?
- Indicate agreement on the agenda.

Concluding the Meeting to Ensure Successful
Follow-Through

- Summary of accomplishments
- Completion of paperwork
- Action planning
- Acknowledgements
- Meeting review

Meeting Evaluation

- Determine to what degree the meeting accomplished its desired outcomes.
- Achieve closure on the process.
- Make ongoing process improvements.
- Provide an opportunity for direct feedback.
- Make choices about what to continue doing and what to change.

References

- Little, Doug and Joyce, *Conflict Prevention and Resolution Through IEP Meeting Facilitation*, Key2Ed, 2013.
- Fletcher, Fran, *The Dynamics of Facilitating IEP Meetings*, 2013.
- Septiol, Christina, *Avoiding Due Process: IDEA Compliance and Communication Strategies*, 2014
